

A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study seeks to propose a framework for effective leadership based on a contemporary perspective. In pursuit for effective leadership, this study defines leadership as the ability to apply philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal and external environment awareness to influence others toward the achievement of goals by working with them and through them.

Introduction

There are many diverse definitions of leadership. For instance, Bennis (1999) defined leadership is the ability to know yourself, have a vision that is well communicated, build trust among colleagues, and take effective action to realize one's own leadership potential. Maxwell (1998) concluded that leadership is the ability to influence others. Rost (1991) defined leadership as an influence force of relationship among leaders and followers who intend to make real changes that reflect their collective purposes. Robbins (2003) defined leadership as "the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals" (p. 314). Eisenhower states that "leadership is the art of getting someone to do something you want done because he or she wants to do it." Mosley, Meggisson and Pietri (2001) defined leadership as a process of influencing other people's activities in the organization toward goal setting and goal achievement. According to Wehrich and Koontzis (1993), leadership is the art or process of influencing others so that they will strive willingly and happily towards the achievement of the goals and objectives. Kotter (1996) inserted that leadership is a set of processes that establishes organizations in the first place or modifies them according to changing situations. Leadership provides a picture of what the future should look like, aligns people with the organizational vision, and inspires them to make it happen. Covey (1992) suggested that leadership is to facilitate changes by genuinely dealing with resisting forces with a true empathy and helping followers feel free to express their opinions and to be involved in generating new, acceptable solutions.

Rationale of the Study

Due to the extent that there is no consensus among researchers and practitioner alike as in what is the best definition for leadership and the most effective leadership theories and models, this study seeks to propose a framework for effective leadership based on a contemporary perspective. In addition, a leadership definition, based on a contemporary perspective, is deprived from the proposed framework.

Leadership Theories and Styles

Numerous leadership theories and styles have been developed resulted from the scholars and practitioners' desire to understand, define, and explain the importance of leadership. For

example, trait theories of leadership consider personal qualities and characteristics that differentiate leaders from non-leaders. In addition, behavior theories of leadership propose that specific behavior differentiate leaders from non-leaders.

Stogdill and Coons (1951) identified two dimensions initiating structure and consideration. The leader initiates structure by defining and structuring his/her role and those of subordinates in the search for goal attainment. Consideration refers to the extent that the leader establishes job relationships characterized by mutual trust, respect for subordinates' ideas, and regard for their feelings. Likewise, Kahn & Katz (1960) suggested two dimensions of leadership behavior namely employee-oriented and production-oriented. The employee-oriented leader emphasizes interpersonal relations, takes a personal interest in the needs of employees and accepts individual differences among members. The production-oriented leader places the emphasis on technical and task aspects of the job. Blake and Mouton (1964) developed the Managerial Grid Model. Five different leadership styles, based on the concern for people and production, are identified in the Managerial Grid Model. They are the impoverished style, country club style, produce or perish style, middle-of-the-road style, and team style. In the impoverished style, leaders exhibit low concern for both people and production. Leaders employ this style to avoid getting into trouble, which results in less innovative decisions. In the country club style, leaders show a high concern for people and a low concern for production. Leaders applying this style pay much attention to the security and comfort of the employees in exchange for better performance. In the produce or perish style, leaders find employee needs unimportant; they provide their employees with money and expect performance back; leaders, in this categories, place a great emphasis on production. In the middle-of-the-road style, leaders try to balance between company goals and workers' needs, for they hope achieve acceptable performance. In team style, great focus is placed on both people and production. Leaders choosing to use this style encourage teamwork and commitment among employees.

Moreover, the U.S. army handbook (1973) presented three different styles of leadership namely authoritarian (autocratic), participative (democratic), and delegation (free reign). Ekvall and Arvonen (1991) proposed that "effective leaders would exhibit development-oriented behavior in which leaders value experimentation, seek new ideas, and generate and implement change." Furthermore, Fiedler contingency model proposes that "effective group performance depends on the proper match between the leader's style and the degree to which the situation gives control to the leader." Having identified three contingency dimensions, Fiedler argues that defining key situational factors that determine leadership effectiveness is crucial; as a result, three situational factors are identified. They are leader-member relationships, task structure, and position power. Leader-member relations are the degree of confidence, trust, and respect subordinates have in their leader. Task structure is the degree to which the job assignments are procedurized. Position-power is the influence derived from one's formal structural position in the organization; includes power to hire, fire, discipline, promote, and give salary increases. In addition to his contingency model, Fiedler and an associate proposed the cognitive resource theory – a theory of leadership that states that stress unfavorably affects a situation and that intelligence and experience can lessen the influence of stress on the leader (Fiedler, 1967). Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory is leadership contingency theory that focuses on followers' readiness. The leader-member exchange (LMX) theory argues that because of time pressure. Leaders establish a special relationship with a small group of their followers. Leaders

create in-groups and out-groups status will have higher performance ratings, less turnover, and greater job satisfaction.

Moreover, path-goal theory, developed by House (1971), is another contingency model of leadership. The theory suggests that it is the leader's job to assist followers in attaining their goals and to provide the necessary direction and/or support to ensure that their goals are compatible with the overall objectives of the group or organization. Vroom and Yetton (1974) developed a leader-participation model that provides a set of rules to determine the form and amount of participative decision-making in different situations. Pitcher (1994) concluded that there are three types of leaders – artists, craftsmen, and technocrats. Artists are imaginative, inspiring, visionary, entrepreneurial, intuitive, daring, and emotional leaders. Craftsmen are well-balanced, steady reasonable, sensible, predictable, and trustworthy leaders. Technocrats are cerebral, detail oriented, fastidious, uncompromising, and hardheaded leaders. Bolman and Deal (1991) suggest that leaders display leadership behaviors in one of four types of frameworks: Structural, Human Resource, Political, or Symbolic. In structural framework, the leader is a social architect whose leadership style is analysis and design. The leader, in human resource framework, is a catalyst and servant whose leadership style is to support, advocate, and empower. In political framework, the leader is an advocate, whose leadership style is coalition and building. Symbolic Framework - The leader in the symbol framework is a prophet, whose leadership style is to inspire.

The Framework for Effective Leadership

Having studied different definitions of leadership and leadership theories and styles, this study defines leadership as the ability to apply philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal and external environment awareness to influence others toward the achievement of goals by working with them and through them. The proposed framework is exhibited in Figure 1.1.

Philosophical awareness refers to the extent that the leader is able to apply his/her conceptual skills to define reality, set directions and vision, and make important decisions for the organization. Psychological awareness is the extent that the leader applies his/her mental and emotional intelligence as well as interpersonal skills in dealing with his/her subordinates from diverse backgrounds. In addition, psychological awareness is the ability to empathize the subordinates' expectation and needs. Psychological awareness helps leaders interact and communicate with their subordinates effectively. Social awareness refers to the leader's ability to establish an essential platform for the subordinates to socialize with him/her and each other in order to bring about harmony in the organization. Cultural awareness enhances the leader to lead an inclusive workplace that nurtures and maximizes the talents of each person to achieve sound business results. Organizational political awareness refers to the extent that the leader is able to determine the individual and organizational factors that cause political behavior in the organization. Political awareness also refers to the leader's ability, through politicking, to use power and dependency to solve conflicts, negotiate, and allocate essential resources appropriately in order to achieve the organizational goals. Organizational economics awareness is the leader's ability to address financial aspects in respect to organizational operations, productions and development. Some examples of financial aspects for organizational operations

and productions are compensation, capital structure, cash flow, project funding, budgeting, revenue generation, profit sharing, etc. Ethical awareness refers to the extent that the leader is knowledgeable and very well informed of moral action and conduct; what is professionally right; and what is conforming to professional standards. Real leaders concentrate on doing the right thing right with the right people; this notion is very important for effective leadership. Technological awareness is the extent that leaders are capable in applying technology to create and sustain healthy relationships in organizations. Internal environment awareness refers to the extent that the leaders are very well informed of the inner-working of organizational business processes and operations, increased expectations, erosion of authority, new management structures, new technologies, competing interests, etc. External awareness is the ability to see the whole picture of industry and market trends, increased competition, changing consumer demand, constrained resources, failed performance, new social values, changing technologies, etc.

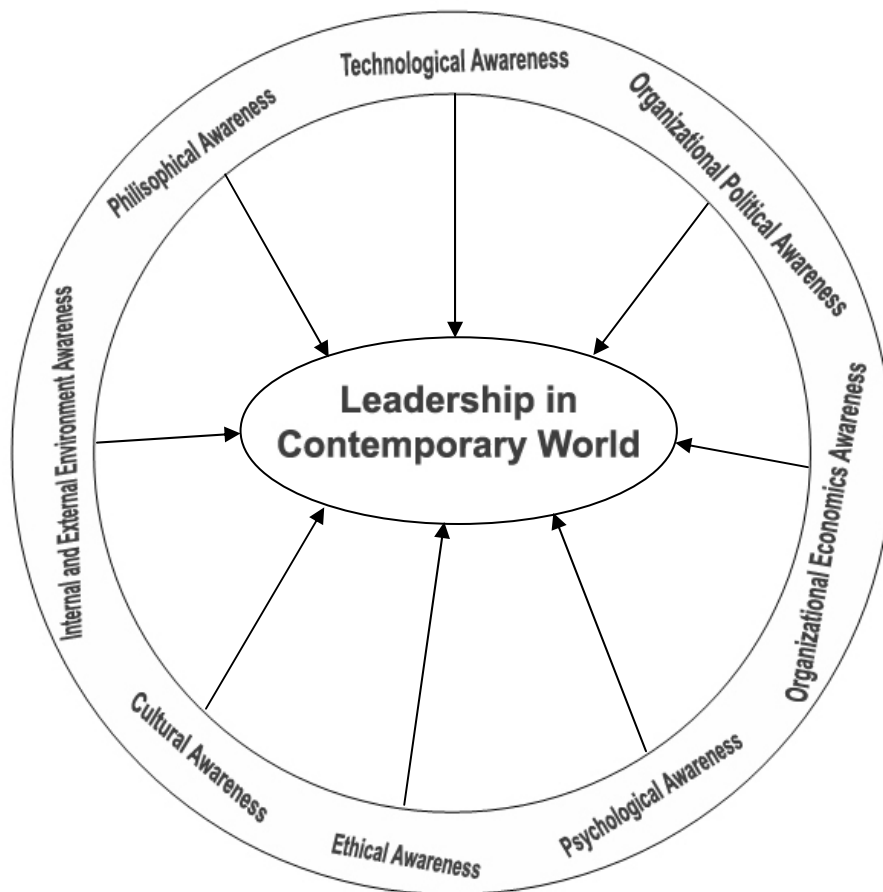


Figure 1.1 The proposed framework for effective leadership

Conclusion

Leadership is the ability to influence others toward achievement of goals. A hybrid of task-oriented and people-oriented leadership styles is probably the most effective leadership style. In task-oriented leadership, the leader has a clear concept of what tasks needed to be done to achieve certain goals, his/her job is to allocate resources and assign tasks to an individual or a group. In this type of leadership, the leader remains an emotional distance from his/her subordinates, yet he/she gives clear directions and develops standards or criteria to evaluate performance. In people-oriented leadership, the leader instills her/his high-touch in their subordinates by establishing solid relationship with everyone. Strong interpersonal skill is needed for this type of leadership. The rationale here is that by building relationship with subordinates, the leader expects work harmony, job satisfaction, and loyalty among subordinates, which lead to efficiency and productivity. The leader should be task-oriented, people-oriented or mixture of both depending on situations and individuals or groups whom he/she deals with.

Up to this point, there has not been any consensus among researchers and practitioner alike as in what is the best definition for leadership and the most effective leadership theories and models. Based on the contemporary perspectives, true leaders are those who are able to apply philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal- and external-environment awareness to influence others toward the achievement of goals by working with them and through them. The ideal attributes of the true leaders that our future society will require are: the ability to define [economic, social and political] reality; strong conceptual, analytical and interpersonal skills; the ability to develop a strong and clear vision and direction; the ability to communicate the vision to the surrounding people; the ability to communicate effectively; the ability to adapt to opportunities, threats and changes; the ability to apply technology in leading people; strong emotional intelligence; problem-solving skills; working under pressures; and strong will, commitment and motivation. Leadership is an art, and science is the set of tools that assists us to practice our art.

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